

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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Arrest made in tire burning case in Ethel

BATON ROUGE – A resident of Ethel was arrested yesterday stemming from recent activities involving illegal tire burning in East Feliciana Parish.

Brian Tramine Hawkins, 24, admitted to burning approximately one hundred tires in order to remove the rims and avoid paying disposal fees on the rubber. The remains of the tires were then disposed of in a nearby forest.

East Feliciana Parish Sheriff deputies responded to a tip, after smoke plumes rising from the burn site were seen on May 21. In conjunction with an investigation by DEQ's Criminal Investigations Division, East Feliciana deputies responded and arrested Hawkins, who is currently in custody at East Feliciana Parish jail for investigation into illegal release of a hazardous substance.

The burning of tires may result in a possible release of Benzene and other hazardous materials into the air and surface water. Such toxic releases can have potentially hazardous consequences upon human health and the environment.

"Illegal dumping and burning like this is a trend in industry that we intend to combat," said Robert Williamson, Supervisor of DEQ's Criminal Investigations Division.

If convicted of the felony, Hawkins could be fined up to \$1 million, or the cost of any cleanup made necessary by the violation. Additionally, he could be fined up to \$100,000 per violation, which may be assessed for each day the violation continues, and costs of prosecution or imprisonment at hard labor for not more than ten years, or both.

An arrest does not constitute guilt in a criminal case. All evidence compiled during the investigation is presented to area prosecutors to determine if formal charges are warranted.

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